

T H E

1501/164.

VANITY of HUMAN LIFE,

A

M O N O D Y.

Sacred to the MEMORY of

The Most Hon. FRANCIS RUSSEL,

MARQUIS of TAVISTOCK,

Who was killed by a Fall from his Horse, a Hunting,

March 1767.

O nostra Vita, ch'è sì bella in vista,
Com' perde agevolmente in un matino
Quel, che 'n molt' anni a gran pena s'acquista!

PETRARCH.



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T H E
VANITY of HUMAN LIFE,
A
M O N O D Y.

BE gone, Delusions vain! —
Leave me, ye smiling meretricious Joys,
That false as Delilah the Soul enchain,
While hostile Cares, and rancorous Passions rise,
And quench the mental Sight!
Be gone! — and while the still, funereal Night

Her

Her awful Pall, compact with thickest Clouds,
 Spreads o'er the World, and all its Glories shrouds,
 Give me to muse on sublunary Blifs,
 How frail, how tranfient ! like a vernal Flow'r,
 That the rude Breath of Boreas means to kifs,
 And kills : or like an air-blown Bubble, born
 To dance and glitter for a fhort fhort Hour
 While all is calm, but foon the Sport and Scorn
 Of envious Winds, it burfts, and is no more !

Ah me how gay, how beautiful, how fweet
 Is Life's fair Profp'ct to th' enchanted Eye
 Of unexperienc'd Youth ! — Not ARNO'S Vale,
 Where all the mingled Charms of Nature meet,
 Is more profufe of Joy :
 There wing'd with Fragrance ev'ry whifp'ring Gale

Delights



Delights the Soul ; Flow'rs of a thousand Dyes,
 The Muskrose, Hyacinth, and Asphodel,
 Purple the Ground ; fresh-breathing Myrtles rise ;
 And in the frequent Grove, the feather'd Choir
 Trill their soft Notes of amorous Desire.
 With ling'ring Feet the raptur'd Stranger strays,
 And, O sweet Vale, dear Region of Delight,
 He cries, where Eden's Beauties charm the Sight,
 Here let me live, here end my blisful Days !
 Fond Wretch, revoke the Pray'r !—
 For swift as Light'ning thro' the desert Air
 A noontide, pestilential Vapour flies,
 And blasts the fairy Scene :
 Each Herb, Plant, Flow'r, shrinks up its Leaves, and dies !

Ye Sons of Fortune, ye who madly doat
 On this vile World, and hug her to your Arms;
 Who now luxuriate in her golden Charms,
 And ever vacant fondly hope she'll prove,
 Amiable ever ; — learn, O timely learn
 To wean your Hearts from such destructive Love,
 And fly to Wisdom's School ! ——
 Not to that Wisdom, crabbed, harsh, and dull,
 That Stoics preach'd along the murm'ring Stream
 Of fam'd ILLISSUS ; nor to that less stern,
 Which Plato taught in studious ACADEME :
 Such Wisdom is rank Folly in Disguise !
 Go, fly to that sepulchral Gloom,
 Where the pale Corps of gentle RUSSEL lies ;
 There Wisdom, bending o'er her Fav'rite's Tomb,

Unwearied

Unwearied Vigils keeps ;
 And ever and anon the Goddess weeps,
 While thus she mocks all human Vanities :

“ Wealth, Grandeur, Pow’r, and Fame,—ye Idol-Train,
 “ At whose throng’d Altars prostrate Millions bow,
 “ Where is your Boasting now ?
 “ Where your Pre-eminence so proud, and vain ?
 “ Go, great Magicians, on the hollow Base
 “ Of empty Hope, bid dazzling Fabrics rise
 “ Of sublunary Joys :
 “ But ah ! how soon shall Death the Structures rase,
 “ Burst your vain Spells, and disenchant the Scene !
 “ Thou breathless Corse, that There in Manhood green
 “ Art sepulcher’d, to crawling Worms a Prey,
 “ Oh what a Change was wrought in one short Day !

“ At

“ At Morn, with Riches crown'd, in Virtues great ;
“ Dear to his Friends, and to his Country dear ;
“ The blooming Hope, and “ Rose of the fair State ; ”
“ Whose opening Leaves with Pride Britannia saw,
“ And thought, how vainly, rich Perfumes to draw
“ From Flow'r so sweet, and fair !
“ At Night — ah me I fondly err, —
“ Or ere the Sun with hot meridian Ray
“ Had pierc'd the Earth — he fainted, sickn'd, died ! —
“ No more his Friends' Delight, his Country's Pride,
“ But oh a poor pale Piece of lifeless Clay ! —

“ Ye hapless few, whom nearer Converse gave
“ His various Worth to know, and hourly trace
“ Each nicer, softer, more domestic Grace,
“ That, like the Touches exquisitely fine

“ Of

“ Of Titian’s Hand, are at a Distance loft,
“ Weep, weep no more — no more, fond Souls, repine
“ That all your Wishes, all your Hopes are crost.
“ Tho’ There with livid Cheeks, and ghastly Eyes,
“ Your dear departed Friend, your RUSSEL lies,
“ ’Tis but his Semblance, but his Shade ;
“ A frail and perishable Casket, made
“ To hold a Jewel of stupendous Price ;
“ A Jewel, that is now exalted high,
“ And flames and sparkles in Heav’n’s Treasury !”

Thus Wisdom speaks—Yet, O thou matchless Youth,
That dost immortal, boundless Joys inherit,
Still will we weep, and melt with Ruth,
Though not for Thee, thou happy, happy Spirit,
Yet for ourselves !—Oh that remorseless Death

Had spar'd Thee, RUSSEL, and with ranc'rous Tooth
 Devour'd the Scum of Britain's Bastard Brood,
 Who, lost to all that's noble, all that's good,
 Enlist in Faction's Cause ;
 And when Ambition calls, or Av'rice draws,
 Grow fat, and wanton in their Country's Blood !
 Vile Parricides ! — Why leave the righteous Gods
 Such Wretches to consume the Fruits of Earth,
 And snatch Thee, RUSSEL, to their blest Abodes ?
 Thou Flow'r of true Nobility, whose Worth
 Promis'd so fair, and might in future Age
 Have prov'd a burning, shining Light, to guide
 Our young Patricians from the fatal Rage
 Of lurking Rocks, that in Life's boist'rous Tide
 Have shipwreck'd many a great and noble Name,
 And spread the Ruins of an honest Fame !

Yes

Yes we will weep—weep for our Country's Loss,
 That, in these Dregs of Britain, ill could spare
 Thy Virtues great, and rare ;
 Thy public Spirit, that contemn'd as Dross
 The golden Baits, which Mammon throws to lure
 Our wand'ring Feet from Virtue's distant Goal ;
 Thy Moderation, that the Stream impure
 Of Party never could controul ;
 Thy Mildness, Greatness, Gentleness of Soul ;
 Thy Bounty, ne'er implor'd in vain,
 That on the meagre Sons of Want and Toil
 In Show'rs spontaneous flow'd,
 And like the Morning Dew, or gracious Rain,
 Distilling gently from a vernal Cloud,

Bad

Bad the bleak Desart smile! —

Excellent Youth, whose Bosom was the Soil
Where ev'ry Grace, and ev'ry Virtue throve;
But chiefly those, the gentlest, sweetest, best,
That humanize and dignify the Breast,
The filial, conjugal, paternal Love!

Yes we will weep—and why, thou widow'd Muse,
That wander'ft, all-disconsolate and pale,
Thro' GRANTA's fav'rite Vale,
Ah why the tributary Tear refuse?
Hence with ungrateful Silence, partial Maid;
And bid thy choicest Streams of Music flow,
In all the artless Negligence of Woe,
To grace the Tomb where TAVISTOCK is laid!
Canst thou forget, how in thy learned Shade

The

The dear ingenuous Youth
 Model'd his Soul to Honour, Virtue, Truth ?
 Oh, if thy torpid Spirits still require
 Some nearer Force to strike the latent Fire,
 Think, how in future Time
 He would have smooth'd Preferment's arduous Way,
 And taught thy best-deserving Sons to climb
 Those Heights, where Wealth and Honours bloom, which now
 Like Fruits, that on rough Precipices grow,
 Are only to be pluck'd by Birds of Prey.

Think,—but ah ! whither do I fondly stray,
 And why recount his matchless Virtues o'er ?
 O —— you who wear, “ in your Heart's Core,”
 His Image deep engrav'd, accept this Lay,
 That rich in Zeal, in Wit and Learning poor,

A rural Muse presents at RUSSEL's Shrine :
Worthless I own the Gift, —yet Shepherds bring
The frail and short-liv'd Beauties of the Spring,
To deck the Altars of their Pow'rs divine.



F I N I S.

Small Male presents at Russia's

to the town the Old, --

The first and short-lived

To seek the Altar of the

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